



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH



NEWS RELEASE

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Student at Valley Middle School in Grand Forks Diagnosed With Tuberculosis *Total number of cases associated with outbreak now at 13*

BISMARCK, N.D. – Health officials are reporting three additional cases of tuberculosis (TB) in Grand Forks, including a student at Valley Middle School. This brings the total number of active cases to 13.

Information and guidance is being sent to parents of children in the middle school regarding testing. If parents do not receive information regarding testing, then testing is not being recommended for their child based on the amount of exposure that child has had to the case. The child with TB will not return to the classroom until he or she is no longer infectious, so parents should not be concerned about sending their children to school.

Tuberculosis is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air when someone with TB disease has coughed or sneezed into the air, usually in an indoor environment. Exposure to tuberculosis includes frequent or prolonged exposure, such as sitting in a small room or confined area for a long period of time with someone who has active TB and is infectious. People are contagious only when there is active disease in their lungs or throat that has not been treated. TB is not spread through clothes, dishes, floors or furniture. This means that students and staff in the middle school who have had prolonged contact with the sick child will be recommended for testing, but it is not necessary for everyone in the school to be tested.

Two cases of TB were earlier identified in Phoenix elementary in Grand Forks. Testing was conducted for the two classrooms and staff at that school last week. Out of the 68 people tested, only one had an abnormal test result. The abnormal result occurred in a member of the staff and he or she was referred to a health-care provider for further testing. An abnormal skin test does NOT mean that an individual is infectious with TB. An abnormal skin test result means that the person may have been exposed to TB and that further testing is needed. There will be a routine follow-up test in eight weeks for those that received a TB skin test.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

Testing and investigations have shown that these cases identified since October are connected to previously confirmed cases in the area. Here is a breakdown of age and gender associated with the cases:

Age	Cases		
Younger than 10	4		
10-19 years	1		
20-29 years	3	Gender	
30-39 years		Female	5
40-49 years	3	Male	8
50- 59 years	1		
60 and older	1		
Total Cases	13		13

Health officials continue to do contact investigations to identify people who may have been exposed to the active cases. Those who are considered at risk will be contacted and given guidance about testing procedures. Examples of groups that may be contacted include family members, coworkers, friends and roommates. When TB cases such as this are occurring in a community, it takes a significant amount of time to conduct the investigations around each case and complete the testing and treatment needed. The investigation likely will continue for months, and it is expected that more cases will be identified.

Anyone can get TB. Individuals with weakened immune systems, including those with AIDS or those infected with HIV, are at increased risk. In the United States, the most common risk factors for TB are social factors, such as substance abuse, being incarcerated in a correctional facility, minority populations, being born in a country where TB is more common and homelessness.

The general symptoms of TB disease include feeling sick or weak, weight loss, fever and night sweats. The symptoms of TB of the lungs include productive, prolonged cough (duration of three weeks or longer), chest pain, and coughing up blood. It should be noted that symptoms usually develop gradually and last for a prolonged period of time. This is different than symptoms of the flu, which usually come on very suddenly and go away after a couple of days to a week. Anyone experiencing symptoms of TB should contact his or her health-care provider as soon as possible for an evaluation.

The most important way to stop the spread of tuberculosis is to cover the mouth and nose when coughing, and for those with TB to take the prescribed medication as directed. Always wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.

For more information, contact Dee Pritschet, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2377 or Grand Forks Public Health, at 701.787.8100. Information about this outbreak, including links to more information about TB, can found by visiting www.grandforksgov.com/publichealth.

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